

## Speak up & be heard

CONSUMER REGISTER lists summaries of major consumer proposals before Federal agencies. If you wish to submit written comments, include your name & address, state the name & *Federal Register* citation of the proposal on which you are commenting and explain your views briefly & clearly.

### Pitted red cherries

Nov. 1 is deadline for comments on Agriculture Dept.'s proposal to add a new grade for canned & frozen red tart pitted cherries. Agriculture's proposal is based on a petition from National Red Cherry Institute, a trade association.

Now, canned & frozen red tart cherries fall into either of 2 classifications: U.S. Grade A (U.S. Fancy) or U.S. Grade C (U.S. Standard). The trade association believes another classification is needed—U.S. Grade B (U.S. Choice).

Grade A tart pitted cherries are as follows: good color, practically free from pits, practically free from defects, good character, normal flavor & odor, score not less than 90 points in a rating system designed to evaluate all the above characteristics.

Grade C classification is as follows: fairly good color, fairly free from pits, fairly free from defects, normal flavor & odor, score not less than 70 points in the rating system.

The new Grade classification would consider the following characteristics: reasonably good color, reasonably free from pits, reasonably free from defects, reasonably good character, normal flavor & odor, score not less than 80 points in the rating system.

Details—*Federal Register*: Sept. 11, page 24904. Send comments to Hearing Clerk, Agriculture Dept., Washington, DC 20250.

### Lids

Nov. 2 is the new deadline for comments on Agriculture Dept.'s proposal to insure that lids of glass jars containing meat & poultry products are designed to prevent dirt or insects from getting into the jars.

The original deadline of Oct. 1 was extended at the request of some members of the container industry who said they needed more time to present data.

The quick-twist, screw-on & snap-on lids have a space between the lid rim & the container. Consumers complained that when the vacuum seal was broken, dirt & insects were sometimes carried into the jar. If the proposal is adopted, lids would have to be designed to prevent the possibility of such contamination.

Details—*Federal Register*: Oct. 1, page 27229. Send comments to Hearing Clerk, Agriculture Dept., Washington, DC 20250.

### 'Morning After'

Nov. 26 is deadline for comments on Food & Drug Administration's (FDA) proposal to require label & packaging changes for the synthetic hormone diethylstilbestrol (DES) when it is used as a "morning after" contraceptive.

The proposal would require manufacturers to provide patients with a brochure explaining the manner of use, precautions, risks, benefits & side effects of the drug. FDA has not approved the synthetic hormone as a contraceptive although some doctors have prescribed it for such use. Even with FDA's proposal for labeling the drug as to its contraceptive use, FDA emphasizes that the drug is not safe for regular or repeated use. However, FDA is accepting applications from manufacturers for new DES drugs under the conditions described in the complete proposal.

FDA does not consider DES safe for use as a routine birth control method because of the large amounts of estrogen taken over a short period of time, causing side effects, such as blood clots. FDA recommends that the drug be prescribed for emergencies only & within 24 hours—not later than 72 hours—after intercourse.

Details—*Federal Register*: Sept. 26, page 26809. Send comments to Hearing Clerk, Health, Education & Welfare Dept., 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, MD 20852.

### Enzymes in cheese products

Dec. 3 is deadline for comments on Food & Drug Administration's (FDA) proposal to allow enzyme modified cheese solids as an optional ingredient in pasteurized processed cheese, cheese food & cheese spread.

Cheese foods, spreads & pasteurized processed cheese are made by blending natural cheeses of different varieties & ages with cream, milk, whey & emulsifiers. Manufacturers have experienced difficulty in obtaining uniform flavors from these cheeses, & present methods of curing cheeses are time consuming, costly & unpredictable.

Enzymes cause fermentation of milk from which cheese is made. The controlled addition of enzymes to processed cheese products would speed up this fermentation during the manufacturing process & would assure that the resulting product would have the same flavor characteristics each time it is manufactured.

Details—*Federal Register*: Oct. 2, page 27299. Send comments to Hearing Clerk, Health, Education & Welfare Dept., Room 6-86, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, MD 20852.

## Meat & poultry

Dec. 7 is deadline for comments on Agriculture Dept.'s proposal to clarify its rules covering the sanitary transportation of meat & poultry in interstate commerce & within some states.

Although Federal inspectors have had authority to reject vehicles that are not clean or otherwise unsuitable for carrying meat & poultry, the regulations have not been sufficiently clear to assure consumers that their food will not become contaminated during transportation.

Some requirements under the clarified rules would be as follows:

- Railroad cars, trucks or other vehicles used for shipping meat & poultry must be constructed in a way that outside air & dust are prevented from entering the vehicle while it is in transit.

- Lye, soda or other chemicals used to clean the interiors of the vehicle must be thoroughly removed.

Details—*Federal Register*: Sept. 28, page 27069. Send comments to Hearing Clerk, Agriculture Dept., Washington, DC 20250.

## Inspection exemption

Dec. 14 is deadline for comments on a proposed Agriculture Dept. regulation that would set up new guidelines for exempting certain meat products from inspection by Agriculture's Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

The proposed regulation refers to processed foods that contain small amounts of meat. The proposal seeks to draw a line between (1) the processed foods that are considered meat food products requiring inspection by APHIS & (2) other processed foods that are exempt from APHIS inspection because they contain so little meat.

Until now there have been no criteria to define clearly those products that must be inspected. Instead, informal guides have been applied to exempt products that contain

meat "in a relatively small proportion" or "historically have not been considered by consumers as products of the meat food industry."

To overcome this vagueness, the proposed regulation would set 2 criteria:

- One criterion would draw the dividing line above 3%. Meat food products containing 3% or less raw meat, raw meat byproducts or meat food products would be exempted from inspection by APHIS. Such products would come under the jurisdiction of the Food & Drug Administration (FDA), as provided by the Federal Food, Drug & Cosmetic Act.

- The other criterion would require that the meat ingredients in the exempt product would have to be processed so that they could not be visually identified as meat in the final product.

Examples of meat food products that would be exempt from APHIS inspection under the proposed regulation include seasoning mixtures & canned vegetables with meat in sauce.

Details—*Federal Register*: Oct. 2, page 27298. Send comments to Hearing Clerk, Agriculture Dept., Washington, DC 20250.

## Tires

Effective March 29, 1974, Transportation Dept. is expanding its definition of "tire failure" for testing car tires for high speed performance & endurance.

Present standards say that tires may not exhibit "tread, ply, cord or bead separation, broken cords or chunking." ("Chunking" means breaking away of pieces of tread or sidewall.)

The revised standards for high speed & endurance testing will prohibit sidewall & innerliner separation, cracking & open splices. These conditions are to be determined visually, not mechanically or scientifically.

Details—*Federal Register*: Sept. 28, page 27050.

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